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Abstract

It has been observed in too many colleges that a public relations or school relations program was supposedly the business of all college personnel and wound up being the business of none. Suggested guidelines for setting up a school relations program on a college campus include: (1) such an office should be headed by a director and placed under a dean or vice president, (2) the office should be a liaison between the college and the high schools it serves, and (3) it should be autonomous with general guidelines. The factors which constitute a good or poor high school-college relations program include: (1) cooperation and support of administration and faculty, and (2) adequate planning, staffing, and financing. The best way to implement such a program is to know the people and institution involved, and to know something about the high school, the community, and the parents of the students. Functions of the public relations office should include: (1) high school and college visitation, (2) preparation, printing, and distributing newsletters, (3) preparing press releases, and (4) organizing and conducting a senior day or counseling day for seniors. (Author/KJ)

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1969 APGA Convention
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Panel Discussion

A UNIQUE APPROACH TO HIGH SCHOOL RELATIONS

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Panel Topic 4: Guidelines for Establishing a School Relations Program in Institutions of Higher Education

PREFACE:

If we can assume that every institution of higher education is interested in promoting and maintaining good public relations with high schools and colleges it wishes to serve, then it seems we should be able to assume that some office with trained personnel should be designated to promote and maintain such a program.

It has been observed in too many colleges that a public relations or school relations program was supposedly the business of all college personnel and wound up being the business of none. Conversely in other colleges and universities we have seen untrained personnel attempt to assist in school relations programs resulting in the creation rather than the solution of problems relating to a good school relations program.

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SUGGESTED GUIDELINES IN ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL RELATIONS PROGRAM ON A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Based upon the above premise here are a few suggested guidelines in establishing a school relations program on a college or university campus:

1. In a university it would seem that such an office should be headed by a director and should be established under the dean or vice president of extra-divisional affairs or administration. Such an organization would insure equal representation to all academic divisions and all university programs.
2. In smaller colleges perhaps such an office could be under the direction of the president or be incorporated in the department of admissions, housing, financial aid, or some other non-academic area, but with definite responsibility given for promoting and maintaining a good school-relations program. It decidely should not be an office attached to any academic division.
3. A college or university school relations office should, I believe, have as a primary function the responsibility of direct and indirect communication between the college or university and the high schools and colleges it serves.
4. As a secondary function the office should maintain liaison

with all academic and non-academic departments within the institution represented. Such internal communication would enable the school relations office to report information accurately to the non-institutional public.

5. As I visualize a school relations office I would hope, to a degree, it would be autonomous in nature operating under rather general guidelines. This would insure enough flexibility to meet day by day changes in operation procedure.

6. To insure coordination and cooperation from both internal staff and high school and college counterparts it might be advisable to have a coordinating or advisory committee for suggestions and program review.

7. The school relations director and his staff should have not only general but specific information about academic divisional and departmental programs, general university or college policy and procedure relating to extra-divisional areas, physical facilities and to some extent staff-student relationships.

8. In addition the staff members of the school relations office serving as personal representatives of the institution before the public should have a broad background of public relations, a knowledge of secondary education as well as college, be interested and enthusiastic in giving service, be able to hold the interest

of large or small audiences of any age group, and dress and act in a manner which reflect the image the public expects of personalities in an institution charged with the training of young people.

9. Such an office should have ample budgetary provisions for support of already existing programs as well as new programs it may initiate from time to time.

10. If a college or university has a school relations office, the president or chancellor should announce that such an office is in operation, give the purpose, organization, functions and staff personnel to all academic and non-academic college staff and all high schools and colleges it is to serve. In addition the president or chancellor should request that matters involving communication between the college or university and high schools or colleges (specifically high schools) served be cleared through this office to avoid duplication of effort and/or misunderstandings.

11. Cooperation with and support of any state or regional school relations committee should be expected of any college or university school relations office.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD OR POOR HIGH SCHOOL-COLLEGE RELATIONS PROGRAM?

1. This can only be answered in general terms since such

programs will vary from one college or university to another, and without knowledge of the administration, staff and interest of the institution in a school relations program it would be impossible to be specific.

A. A good program must have the cooperation and support of the president or chancellor, divisional deans, department heads and staff. When high school staff--college staff--students and parents are invited to the campus as guests it takes the cooperation of interested campus staff to assist in making whatever the event may be successful. Without this type of cooperation a school relations office has failed before it started.

B. A poor school relations program usually is the result of poor planning or no planning--it is a responsibility tacked on to some other division or department which is already overloaded. It is a program inadequately staffed and financed, it receives at best, minimum support from administration and staff and is looked upon as taking their valuable time from classroom teaching, laboratory, writing, research or administrative duties.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONALLY?

In part this has been answered in the guidelines. However,

since we think of a college or university school relations office as liaison between a given institution of higher education and other institutions similar on both levels of education it is important to know the people and institutions with which you are relating.

It is important to know something about the high school, the community, the percent of graduating students attending college, the socio-economic background of parents and whether financial assistance will be necessary for what percent of the students if they are to obtain a college education.

Immediately this assumes the school relations staff will be working with campus admissions, registration, financial aid office, student orientation as well as divisions and departments for the purpose of relaying information about courses, sections, credit requirements, financial help and academic and personal advisement.

THE FUNCTIONS OF SUCH AN OFFICE IN ADDITION TO THOSE MENTIONED MIGHT BE:

1. High school and college visitation.
2. Organizing and conducting transition conferences.
3. Organizing and conducting subject matter articulation conferences.
4. Prepare, print and distribute periodic newsletters.
5. Provide a tour service and information center for

visiting students and parents.

6. Organize and conduct, with the cooperation of staff, a senior day or counseling day for seniors.
7. Prepare press releases on scheduled campus events involving high school students.
8. Collect information about students for admissions and financial aid offices.
9. Participate in college day and night programs.
10. Provide a speaker's bureau to serve alumna groups, civic clubs and other organizations requesting this service.
11. Compile, print and distribute informational literature used in promoting the objectives of the school relations program.
12. Giving personal information to counselors and students about admissions opportunities and other policies and procedures of the institution.
13. Providing students and counselors with the opportunity to pose individual questions which may be answered by the appropriate university personnel.

WHAT ARE THE TRENDS IN HIGH SCHOOL--COLLEGE RELATIONS?

Originally there were only two national associations active in the area of school-college relations. These were the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Today many national associations and organizations as well as state and regional committees are making an honest attempt to bring about improved relations between the two levels of education for the benefit of the college bound or transferring student.

A few years ago the first vertical organization on school-college relations was formed to serve as a "clearing-house" to receive and distribute information between associations and committees on PROJECTS, RESEARCH AND IDEAS. It is known as the NATIONAL COUNCIL ON SCHOOL-COLLEGE RELATIONS. It started with only seven associations with delegates on the council--now there are seventeen national and regional associations and organizations with delegates on the council. This council now has communication with the officers of the associations with delegates on the council and with thirty-eight state and regional committees.

As a result of the many and rapid changes affecting all levels of education, increased communication and cooperation has become essential if each segment carries out a successful educational mission. For this as well as other reasons more colleges and universities have either installed or are planning to install a school relations office with full-time responsibilities to assume many of the institutional functions discussed by this panel.

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